

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
CHARTER SCHOOL APPEALS	2.500

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-108 allows public charter school sponsors to appeal the denial of an application by the local board of education to the State Board of Education (the “State Board”).

The State Board will not consider appeals of applications that did not include all of the statutorily required elements or that were submitted outside the application window set by the local board of education in accordance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 48-13-107.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to set forth the process for submitting an appeal of the denial of a charter school application by the local board of education to the State Board.

1. **Generally.** If a local board of education denies an amended charter school application, the sponsor may appeal the decision to the State Board within ten (10) days of the local board of education’s decision to deny the charter school application.

2. **Notice of Appeal.** The sponsor shall notify the General Counsel of the State Board by email of the sponsor’s decision to appeal the local board of education’s denial of the amended charter school application within ten (10) days of such denial. This notice of appeal shall contain the following information:

- (a) Copies of the initial and amended applications.
- (b) Summary of application timeline including date that the application was originally submitted to the LEA, date of public hearing, and date the application was denied by the local board of education.
- (c) Brief statement, no longer than three (3) pages, explaining why the local board of education’s denial of the charter school application was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district, or community.

Any proposed corrections to the charter school application, as permitted by Tenn. Code Ann. §49-13-108(a)(3)(C), must be made at the time of appeal to the State Board. State Board staff will confirm to the sponsor receipt of the appeal and the date of receipt.

3. **Application Information.** State Board staff will gather information related to each application from the local board of education and/or the Tennessee Department of Education. The compilation may include:

- (a) A list of individual(s) that reviewed the initial and amended applications
- (b) Copies of the minutes and/or notes, if such were prepared, from any review team meetings and local board of education work sessions and meetings in which the application was discussed.
- (c) Copies of the completed scoring sheets used to evaluate the applications.

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- (d) Copies of any reports or notes prepared for the local board of education by reviewers or other local board of education staff.
- (e) Copies of the letters informing the sponsor of the local board of education's reasons for denying the initial and amended applications.

The sponsor, local board of education, and/or the Tennessee Department of Education shall comply with such document request and provide any applicable documents to the State Board staff within five (5) business days of receipt of the document request.

4. Fiscal Impact Information. If the denial by the local board of education was based upon substantial negative fiscal impact, the LEA and the sponsor must submit documentation explaining the fiscal impact of the charter school. The local board of education shall provide this documentation within ten (10) business days of receiving notification from the State Board that a sponsor is appealing the local board of education's denial of a charter application. The burden will be on the LEA to prove that substantial negative fiscal impact does exist. Supporting materials should include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Current enrollment figures of the LEA and an estimate of the number of students currently enrolled who will transfer to the charter school seeking authorization;
- (b) An estimate, based on prior years' data, of the number of students who will no longer be enrolled in the LEA during the school year in which the charter school seeks to begin operation for reasons other than a transfer to the charter school;
- (c) A projection of the LEA's student enrollment for the school year in which the charter school seeks to begin operation, excluding the estimated number of students who will transfer to the charter school seeking authorization. Such projections shall include estimates, using prior years' data, of increased revenue to the LEA from first-time enrollees or transferees into the district; and
- (d) Specific facts or financial information and a written statement demonstrating how placement or transfer of students to a charter school within the LEA will impose a budgetary or financial burden on the LEA beyond that associated with normal enrollment fluctuations, including an objective analysis of the LEA's ability to adjust expenses on a system-wide basis due to the estimated numbers and anticipated placement of students who will transfer to the charter school seeking authorization.

5. Public Hearing. The State Board is required to hold a public hearing on the charter application within sixty (60) days after receipt of the notice of appeal.

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- (a) Date. State Board staff will schedule a date for the public hearing to be held in the school district where the sponsor proposes to open the charter school and will communicate the date and time of this hearing to the sponsor and the local board of education, and post notice of the hearing on the State Board's website.
- (b) Conduct. The executive director of the State Board or a State Board staff member will preside at the hearing. The executive director or other staff member may ask questions of the sponsor, local board of education or those offering public comments at any time during the hearing. The executive director or other staff member may end portions of the hearing or the hearing itself if the sponsor, local board of education or members of the public are out of order. Examples of conduct that may warrant calling speakers out of order include: yelling or using obnoxious or offensive language; speaking out of turn; or denigrating participants or other employees or officials of either the sponsor or the local board of education by name calling or similar conduct.
- (c) Presentations. The local board of education will have twenty (20) minutes to present the reasons for the local board's denial. The sponsor will have twenty (20) minutes to respond and show why the local board of education's decision is contrary to the best interests of the students, school district, or community.
- (d) Public Comment. There will then be fifteen (15) total minutes for public comment. Members of the public who wish to comment may register at the hearing and to the extent time permits, will be called to speak in the order their names appear on the registration list. Each member of the public will be permitted to speak for no more than three (3) minutes. The executive director or other staff member, in their discretion, may increase the time for public comment based on the circumstances. Written comments may also be submitted at the public hearing or submitted to the State Board as specified at the hearing and on any notices or agendas. The local board of education will have five (5) minutes for a closing statement and then the sponsor will have five (5) minutes for a closing statement.

6. Standard of Review

- (a) State board staff and a charter application review committee (the "Review Committee") will conduct a de novo on the record review of the proposed charter school's application and provide recommendations to the executive director of the State Board.

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- (b) In order to overturn a denial of the local board of education, the State Board must find that the local board's decision was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community.
- (c) If a local school board's denial of a charter application is based on substantial negative fiscal impact, the State Board must also consider the financial impact of the charter school on the LEA. If the State Board finds that the proposed charter school will have a substantial negative fiscal impact on the LEA, it will uphold the decision of the LEA as authorization of such school would be contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community.
- (d) The State Board shall abide by the principles and criteria for application review set forth in State Board Policy 6.300.

7. Interviews.

- (a) The State Board shall interview the governing board of each sponsor that has filed an appeal in accordance with this policy. The interview panel may consist of State Board staff, State Board members, and members of the Review Committee and shall be conducted in accordance with State Board Policy 6.300. These interviews shall not be open to the public. Results of the interview shall be considered in the executive director's recommendations to the State Board.

8. Decision of the State Board

- (a) Following the public hearing and review of the application, the executive director of the State Board will provide written findings and recommendations to the State Board. The findings and recommendations of the executive director of the State Board will be discussed in a work session, if ruling at a regular meeting, or, prior to the agenda item, if ruling at a special called meeting.
- (b) The State Board will meet and render a decision within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal. The State Board may:
 - i. Affirm the decision of the local board of education, or

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- ii. If the application is for a charter school in an LEA that does not contain at least one (1) priority school on the current or last preceding priority school list, and if the State Board finds that the local board's decision was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community, the State Board shall remand the decision to the local board of education with written instructions for approval of the charter. These written instructions shall specify the objective reasons for the decision. The decision of the State Board shall be final and not subject to appeal. The LEA, however, shall be the chartering authority,¹ or
 - iii. If the application is for a charter school in an LEA that contains at least one (1) priority school on the current or last preceding priority school list, and if the State Board finds that the local board's decision was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community, the State Board may approve the application for the charter school. The decision of the State Board shall be final and not subject to appeal and the State Board shall become the chartering authority.²
- (c) If the State Board becomes the chartering entity pursuant to 8(b)(iii) above, the LEA and the charter school may submit a charter agreement signed by the LEA and the charter school to the State Board stating that the charter school shall be overseen and monitored by the LEA. If such charter agreement is received by the State Board within thirty (30) calendar days after the State Board becomes the charter authorizer, then the authorization of the charter school shall be officially transferred to the LEA. Such agreement can be submitted electronically.

¹ T.C.A. § 49-13-108(a).

² *Id.*